6. Potential Issues

The Detroit Intermodal Freight Terminal Project EIS follows the conclusion in December 2001 of the DIFT Feasibility Study which recommended a full environmental impact statement be conducted because: 1) the effects of the DIFT on the quality of the human environment are likely to be highly controversial; and, 2) the DIFT may establish a precedent for future actions.

The DIFT EIS will focus on refinements to Rail Strategy 3 and the No Action alternative. Rail Strategy 3 calls for expanding the existing railroad-controlled property in the area from about 500 acres to 840 acres (an increase of 340 acres). The freight terminal would be served by six entrance/exit gates (Figure 1). Daily intermodal train traffic is expected to grow by the year 2025 from fewer than a dozen today to 50-plus, and be associated with 16,000 intermodal truck movements per day into and out of the terminal in 2025 compared to 2,000 intermodal truck trips today. (Note that the areas proposed for absorbtion into DIFT now generate truck and auto trips that would be eliminated with the project.)

The EIS will pay particular attention to the following issues in alphabetical order:

- Acquisition/Relocation – The expansion of the site by 300+ acres would likely relocate upwards of 70 single- and multi-family residences and more than 70 businesses.

- Air Quality – Existing and future truck traffic with and without the DIFT will be examined to determine changes in air quality for established pollutant limits. The issue of air toxics will be addressed using the most recent information from US EPA and other recognized sources.

- Cultural Resources – Surveys are underway in the areas around the fringe of the DIFT, primarily for historic structures. Archeological resources have largely been disturbed by historical development.

- Economic Impacts – The effects on the economic viability of the local community and on regional jobs and income will be analyzed. This will include use of the REMI computer model.

- Environmental Justice – The siting of the DIFT (options that were reviewed and rejected), and whether there are disproportionate impacts on local residents with or without the project will be addressed.

- Hazardous Waste/Materials – Much of the land subject to potential acquisition for DIFT has been in industrial uses and that have the potential to contaminate soils and/or groundwater. Literature and field investigations will be conducted to determine the extent and seriousness of any contamination and what, if any, remediation might be necessary to redevelop the land.

- Indirect (Secondary) and Cumulative Impacts – Historic aerial photography and planning documents will be used to gauge effects removed in time and/or distance from the DIFT. The following impacts will be determined:

  - Mobility
    - ✓ Travel changes induced by creating the DIFT
    - ✓ Changes in regional crash experience
    - ✓ Number of "high crash" locations affected
  - Energy Changes
    - ✓ Right-of-way and construction costs possibly incurred
  - Land Use
    - ✓ Conversion to different uses
  - Air Quality
    - ✓ Localized carbon monoxide air emissions
    - ✓ Regional air quality effect
  - Cultural Resources
    - ✓ Change in historic/archaeologic resources
    - ✓ Change in parklands
    - ✓ Change in noise exposure
  - Community
    - ✓ Number of residential units and business properties potentially affected
    - ✓ Residential properties, churches and schools with possible change in noise exposure
    - ✓ Effects on community cohesion
    - ✓ Potential environmental justice issues
    - ✓ Change in economic vitality
    - ✓ Change in aesthetics
  - Water
    - ✓ Water quantity and quality as affected by changes in drainage
    - ✓ Quantity and quality of groundwater
    - ✓ Quantity and quality of wetlands affected

- Noise – Changes in train activity on the site and the paths of trucks to and from the DIFT require noise prediction and comparison to established noise abatement criteria to determine the reasonableness and feasibility of noise walls or berms and their locations.

- Parklands, particularly St. Hedwig Playground – The status of the St. Hedwig Playground under Section 4(f) (which protects public recreation areas) will be determined, and any necessary mitigation defined. Indirect effects on public recreation areas and parks will be noted.

- Social Impacts/Community Cohesion – The DIFT holds the potential to enhance the surrounding neighborhoods and redirect DIFT-related truck traffic. Local access could change if Lonyo Street were closed. Relocatees may have the opportunity to occupy infill housing on a large remnant property on the north side of DIFT. These issues will be examined in the context of effects on the community and its proposals for development/redevelopment, particularly those adopted by the local government having jurisdiction.

- Water Quality
  - Water quantity and quality as affected by changes in drainage
  - Quantity and quality of groundwater
  - Quantity and quality of wetlands affected